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Most of us do not realize how dependent we are on various sources of energy in our daily lives. From the buzz of the alarm clock and brewing of the coffee, our day is spent using all sorts of products that are made from or require various forms of energy. When the cost of that energy goes up significantly - or when it is cut off for some reason - we do take notice.

For example, some of us remember the OPEC oil embargo in 1973. The gasoline shortages caused lines at gas stations that often stretched for several city blocks. And, if your car desperately needed a fill-up on a day when the date on the calendar was an even number, you were out of luck if the last digit on your license plate was an odd number. Many Americans felt angry, frustrated, discouraged, and helpless.

You would think that those events would motivate us to become as energy independent as possible. But, incredibly, we are more dependent on foreign sources of energy than ever before. In 1973, America got 30 percent of its oil from foreign countries. Now that level of dependence is up to 60 percent, and studies indicate we are headed to 75 percent by 2010.

In addition, we have sealed off huge reserves of energy from exploration and production. We have made it impossible to build new refineries or new nuclear power plants. Not only has the government been lax in encouraging the development of new sources of energy, in too many cases it has actually discouraged or prevented it.

Several times over the past few years, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a broad energy bill to try to get us back on the right track. Unfortunately, the Senate has not followed suit.

Once again, the House is offering our country an opportunity to turn things around. Last week, we passed H.R. 6, the "Energy Policy Act of 2005." If such a bill had been signed into law years ago, I believe the United States would be much more self-reliant in meeting its energy needs. This bill is not perfect and will not result in instantly lower fuel prices, but I am impressed by how diverse and visionary it is. Some of the things H.R. 6 includes:

- Boosting the domestic energy supply through various tax incentives to increase production, by allowing more exploration and development of oil and natural gas on non-park federal lands, and by increasing by 1 billion barrels the capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve;
- Accelerating the reactivation of idle refineries and the construction of new ones by making the regulatory and approval processes less burdensome;
- Stimulating the production of energy from such sources as wind, solar, clean coal, and biomass through various incentives;
- Reducing pollution through such measures as a program to make hydrogen fuel cars competitive in the marketplace by 2020;
- Funding energy efficiency programs for public buildings, and requiring a 20 percent reduction in energy use in federal buildings by 2013;
- Giving the Department of Energy the authority to develop programs to expand electricity production and supply through nuclear and hydropower production;
- Making the national electricity transmission grid more reliable through new enforceable standards and incentives for improvements;
- Promoting the production of liquefied natural gas by making the regulatory process simpler.

There are some indications that the new Senate that was seated in January will be more receptive than past Senates about getting something done on energy policy. But I will do everything I can to keep pushing this bill until it is signed into law. We cannot afford to neglect this national priority any longer.